Office of Immigration

Business Plan 2005-06

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Message from the Minister and Chief Executive Officer

We are pleased to present the 2005-2006 Business Plan for the new Office of Immigration.

Our plan is based on the province's first Immigration Strategy, released by Premier John Hamm in January 2005. This strategy is built on advice provided by immigration partners, businesses, immigrants, and many others. Based on the solid foundation of the strategy and its development process, we are confident we will succeed in our mission to attract, integrate and retain more immigrants.

Our goal is to attract 3,600 immigrants annually by 2010 - more than doubling our the current immigration intake. We also plan to retain 70 per cent of immigrants by 2011. These goals represent a major challenge that will engage all Nova Scotians.

A first priority is to complete the establishment of the new Office, bringing a focused, co-ordinated approach to immigration activities. This will allow the Province to plan *and act* more effectively with our partners in immigration, in our communities and within other levels of government, as Nova Scotia continues its tradition as a welcoming new home for people from around the world.

Government will invest the financial and human resources to support these partnerships and the work of the new Office. Just as important, better co-ordination and planning among funding partners, based on our new strategy, should put all available dollars to the best use possible.

As a result of these efforts, we look forward to more immigrants coming to live *and stay* in Nova Scotia this year, and in the years ahead.

Original Signed by
Minister of Immigration

Date

Original Signed by
Chief Executive Officer

Date

Mission

To take a lead role in engaging and working with partners to attract, integrate, and retain immigrants, recognizing the important contributions they make to our social, economic, and cultural fabric.

Planning Context

The Nova Scotia Government's overall vision for the province is of a healthy, prosperous, self-sufficient Nova Scotia. Immigration is one path by which this will be achieved.

The economic and skills agenda for the province is outlined in three documents: *Opportunities for Prosperity, Skills Nova Scotia Framework,* and the *Innovation Policy.* Immigration is a component of each of these.

A host of demographic trends, many of which are related to slowing and then zero population growth and an aging population, have increased the importance of immigration to Nova Scotia's future. Failure to address these challenges will have serious implications for future generations, including lost economic opportunities, competitive disadvantages, declining communities, increasing fiscal pressures, and potential labour market shortages.

As a much-needed part of the solution, immigration will help provide flexibility and soften the cost of adjustment on Nova Scotia's population. However, the province has not faired so well in attracting immigrants in recent years. Between 1995 and 2003, the number of immigrant arrivals to our province dropped nearly 60 per cent. As a result, federal funding for our settlement agencies has decreased, affecting their ability to provide adequate services. While the decreasing numbers of immigrants to the province represents a considerable challenge, even more worrisome is the fact that only 40 per cent of newcomers destined for the province actually stay.

To address our poor immigration attraction and retention performance, the Premier mandated the Ministers of Education; Economic Development; and Tourism, Culture and Heritage to work towards the development of a comprehensive immigration strategy for the Province of Nova Scotia. After a series of stakeholder consultations in the fall of 2004, the Premier introduced Nova Scotia's first ever Immigration Strategy in January 2005, which charts the course of action for four key directions- welcoming community, attraction, integration and retention.

The Government created an Office of Immigration and appointed a Minister of Immigration, both of which were key recommendations from the consultations. The Office of Immigration will consolidate all immigration related matters into one location and will be responsible for implementing the actions outlined in the Immigration Strategy. The office is currently operating in a temporary location and a key priority for 2005-06 will be to establish and staff a permanent office. This will require a new investment in financial resources, and will require a transfer of certain responsibilities from other departments, especially Education and Economic Development. Key to success will be solidifying ongoing partnerships with those departments

and other provincial departments with mandates that continue to support the objectives of the Immigration Strategy.

In addition to working with provincial departments, the office will be focusing on relationships with other key partners, including federal and municipal governments, service providing organizations (SPOs), regional development authorities, university and college partners and ethnic communities, among others.

The Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy will support initiatives already underway to attract immigrants to various communities in Nova Scotia. A number of communities (both geographic and ethnic) have already taken action to meet the needs of their communities.

There is solid public support behind the strategy. Expectations are high and the Government of Nova Scotia has been called to act. Local media outlets have raised the profile of immigration, with Chronicle Herald and the CBC running week-long series on the topic, in addition to a steady flow of stories related to immigration from other media sources. The intense media spotlight on immigration has increased understanding of the importance of immigration to addressing future demographic and economic challenges. Raising awareness is vital to the successful implementation of the strategy.

Since the creation of the Office of Immigration and the launch of the strategy document the Nova Scotia Nominee Program has been the focus of media attention. It is obvious that greater clarity is required to ensure that this program is open and transparent. As the Nova Scotia Nominee Program expands, many of these concerns will be addressed.

In 2005–06, the new office will be involved in a number of federal-provincial-territorial negotiations. In November 2004, federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for immigration agreed to work together to develop a shared vision for the future course of Canada's immigration program. The ministers agreed to work together on a national immigration framework for attracting, settling and retaining newcomers in all regions of Canada. This framework will lay the foundation for a more responsive immigration program, which includes stronger partnerships between federal and provincial/territorial governments, and opportunities for increased participation from cities and communities, large and small, and from employers and others. Federal-provincial negotiations on this framework will be ongoing throughout 2005–06.

Within this overall environment, the Office of Immigration will work with partners to advance its strategic goals, outlined in the section to follow. Immigration is a long term initiative—it will take time to see significant results. Our immigration strategy is a five year plan. This business plan is year one of implementation. Our focus in year one is to put in place the necessary infrastructure and partnerships.

Strategic Goals

The strategic goals of the Office of Immigration emanate from our mission. They support our long term targets to attract 3,600 immigrants per year within four years of full strategy implementation and retain 70 percent of immigrants during the 2006–2011 census period

1. Market and promote Nova Scotia as an attractive immigration destination.

2. Assist immigrant integration into Nova Scotia society by ensuring that they have access to necessary settlement services to help them live, work, and learn in Nova Scotia.

3. Retain immigrants by working with partners to address barriers to social and economic inclusion that allow them to make Nova Scotia their permanent home.

4. Encourage a welcoming community for newcomers by educating Nova Scotians about the contributions immigrants make to our social, cultural, and economic prosperity.

Core Business Areas

The following set of Core Business Areas and associated initiatives form the backbone for the office's 2005–06 Business Plan:

Attraction and Recruitment

- Promote and market Nova Scotia, in partnership with communities, as an attractive immigrant destination.

- Manage the Nova Scotia Nominee Program, the Province of Nova Scotia's primary immigrant attraction tool, and use it to address Nova Scotia's immigration, economic, labour force, and community development needs.

Integration and Retention

- Partner with existing funders and settlement providing organizations (SPOs) to coordinate delivery of settlement and integration programming and, therefore, ensuring that newcomers have better access to timely and quality information and services upon arrival.

- Raise awareness and educate the public about the importance of immigration to Nova Scotia's future.

Corporate Services and Administration

- Provide advice and support in policy, planning, research, interdepartmental coordination, and intergovernmental relations as they relate to immigration.

- Develop partnerships with all key stakeholders to lever existing and new resources and create synergies to achieve our common goals.

Priorities

The following are the priorities for the Office of Immigration in 2005–06, as they relate to each Core Business Area. Many of the following priorities are multi year initiatives.

The primary focus for this fiscal year will the establishment of and staffing of a permanent Office of Immigration, consolidating all provincial immigration activities into one location. A key priority of the office will be to formalize strong connections with colleagues in provincial departments and with federal and other partners. The office will also undertake to develop policies, plans and procedures for addressing key components of the Immigration Strategy.

Attraction and Recruitment

Promote and market Nova Scotia, in partnership with communities, as an attractive immigrant destination. *This is a multi-year initiative. The major actions to be undertaken in 2005-06 include:*

- Develop a marketing plan and materials to promote Nova Scotia as an attractive immigration destination, coordinating immigration marketing with business, tourism, other Atlantic provinces and other marketing strategies (e.g., Brand Nova Scotia) and including promotional materials to be used at immigration fairs and conferences, and promotion of the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP).

- Engage Canadian visa posts to ensure that immigration applications are being processed in a timely fashion and to examen how Nova Scotia is being presented to prospective immigrants.

Manage the Nova Scotia Nominee Program, the province's primary immigrant attraction tool, and use it to address Nova Scotia's immigration, economic, labour force, and community development needs. *The major actions to be taken in 2005–06 include:*

- Transfer responsibility for the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP) from the Office of Economic Development to the Office of Immigration.

- Optimize the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP) by:
  - developing a framework for the NSNP Community Identified stream to assist regional development authorities
  - designing the new International Student and Family Business streams
  - completing the assessment of a possible Entrepreneur stream and
  - ensuring that the fee structure for existing and new streams are competitive with other provinces.

Integration and Retention

Partner with existing funders and settlement providing organizations (SPOs) to coordinate delivery of settlement and integration programming and, therefore, ensuring that newcomers have better access to timely and quality information and services upon arrival. This is a multi-year initiative. In 2005–06 the office will:

- Devise a strategy for a more cooperative and effective settlement funding framework in collaboration with all government partners and settlement providing organizations (SPOs) and to improve access to settlement services in regions outside Metro Halifax that have no critical mass of immigrants (e.g., through outreach programs or online).

- Work with settlement organizations and appropriate government department and agencies to initiate a gender-based analysis of family-specific settlement issues, recognizing the different cultural and gender-based issues faced by immigrant women and men, as well as the needs of immigrant youth.

- Develop a plan to address the establishment of an immigrant credential assessment service and work with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Department of Health to establish an assessment service for internationally educated health professionals (IEHP).

- Initiate partnerships with employers, labour unions, universities, regulatory bodies, and professional associations for the purposes of showing immigrants how to enter the labour force in their chosen professions.

- Launch, and keep current, a web site that provides a wealth of information for immigrants to assist with settlement and integration.

Raise awareness and educate the public about the importance of immigration to Nova Scotia's future. *In 2005–06 actions planned to implement this initiative are to:*

- Develop a plan to raise awareness about the immigrant experience among Nova Scotia's youth, ethnic communities and citizenry in general and use the Immigration website as an effective information sharing tool.

- Identify and where possible help address capacity needs of private and group refugee sponsors in communities interested in aiding those in need of protection.

Corporate Services and Administration

Provide advice and support in policy, planning, research, interdepartmental coordination, and intergovernmental relations as they relate to immigration. *Actions in 2005–06 to accomplish this longer term initiative will be to:*

- Strengthen partnerships with federal departments, regionally and nationally, including CIC, ACOA, Heritage Canada, and HRSDC, and establish federal-provincial and interdepartmental working committees to ensure good communication, collaboration and coordination.

- Undertake framework agreement and Memorandum of Understanding negotiations with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) tailored to meet the province's immigration goals and objectives.

- Work with CIC, through the development of Canada's Immigration Framework, to address issues identified by immigrants and settlement providing agencies, concerning processing time frames, client service issues, and visa posts.

- Develop a resource base of research available and currently underway by universities, research institutions, governments, NGOs as well as research needed to support policy and program development.

Develop partnerships with all key stakeholders to lever existing and new resources and create synergies to achieve our common goals. *High priority 2005–06 actions to help accomplish this longer term initiative are to:*

- Address the very large and complex issue of credential recognition by:
  - developing a plan to encourage regulatory bodies and business to recognize foreign education and work experience and pursue mentorships
  - better identifying potential skills shortages
  - promoting supportive workplace environments

- Engage organized labour and business in the promotion of immigrant supportive workplaces and with forecasting skills shortages and labour needs both of which may provide better opportunities for immigrants.

- Build relationships and understanding with religious, ethno-cultural, linguistic and voluntary communities to attract and welcome newcomers, improve integration, and increase retention.

Budget Context

OFFICE OF IMMIGRATION 2005-06	
	Budget (000's)
Total Program Expenses - Gross Current	**$ 2,728**
Net Program Expenses - Net of Recoveries	**$ 2,628**
Salaries and Benefits	**718**
Funded Staff (FTE's)	**10.8**

Outcome/Performance Measures

Outcome	Measure	Data	Benchmark	Target Year	Strategies to achieve the target
To take a lead role in engaging and working with partners to attract, integrate, and retain immigrants, recognizing the important contributions they make to our social, economic, and cultural fabric.	Attract 3,600 immigrants to Nova Scotia.	CIC Landing Data	1,748 (2004)	2010	Optimize the Nova Scotia Nominee Program (NSNP) Develop a marketing plan and materials to promote Nova Scotia as an attractive immigration destination.
	Retain 70 percent of immigrants arriving in Nova Scotia.	2011 Census Data	40% (1991-2001)	2011 Census data (released in 2012)	Devise a strategy for a more cooperative and effective settlement funding framework. Work with settlement organizations and appropriate government department and agencies to initiate a gender-based analysis of family-specific settlement issues. Initiate partnerships with employers, labour unions, universities, regulatory bodies, and professional associations for the purposes of showing immigrants how to enter the labour force in their chosen professions.